

The School “Pinchable”

Are the corridors of London’s schools a thieves delight? Headliners reports from Islington Arts and Media School investigate whether stealing in schools really is a problem.



Have you had anything nicked at school? Apparently not! Not a single incident has been reported this term here at Islington Arts and Media School. Is it because we go to a wonderful safe school, or is it the CCTV watching our every move? Or are we too scared to report it?

According to a recent survey 75% of students polled said they would report a theft in school. However, one student in Year 9 said she wouldn’t bother. “I’d deal with it myself. I don’t want adults to deal with it because they will call my mum and people will have to have their bags checked. It will just cause too much hassle. Also if the person is caught they might flip.”

People don’t report it due to the hassle of it all. However, with most secondary schools in London having in-school police officers, it’s their job to relieve the hassle factor for the pupil. But on the ground level it seems that it is human nature to weigh up the options and think, ‘is it worth it?’ and ‘what might the come-back be?’

So what would you do if you saw a robbery going on in the school? It seems that all the teachers we spoke to said that they would intervene.

Mr Ashorobie said. “First I would shout until their ears ring. Then I would take them to the person they were robbing from so they could admit what they were doing and then finally I would take them to whoever was in charge. I wouldn’t take them to the police straight away, only if it warranted it.”

Nearly half the students said they would intervene, but there was also an air of ‘it’s not my problem and I’m not going to get involved’ in the students we spoke to. A Year 11 male said “I wouldn’t do anything unless it was my boy, then I’d get involved. If I don’t know the person I’d just let the person get robbed. I’m no snitch.” The same is said by a Year 10 female pupil. “I wouldn’t do anything. It’s not my business. It’s got nothing to do with me.”



But it comes back to the ‘is it worth it’ question. Students and teachers have to assess the risk before intervening. Will you save the day or are you putting your own safety at risk? Is the best option just to report it?

It seems that the most likely thing to be stolen in schools is cold hard cash. It’s easy to conceal, it’s hard to prove that the thief didn’t already have that money on them; it’s not like you can write your name on a 50p, and are you going to report the incident over a small amount of money?

The debate over whether incidents of theft should be dealt in-house by the school or involve the police is divided. Science teacher Mr Patel believes the laws of physics are not the only laws that need to be followed. Theft is theft wherever it takes place. “The police must be involved. Young people have to know what the consequences are in the real world.” Food Technology teacher Ms Mckernan has a different recipe to solving the problem. “I think the thief should be given the chance to own up first. If I saw someone stealing I would take the matter into my own hands first and then go to the Head Teacher.”

One Year 9 female feels that teachers can play a valuable role in defusing the situation. “I think teachers should deal with the matter not the police. It would have to be one of the teachers pupils trust. Maybe it would turn out that it was your friend that stole the thing, but they stole it ‘cos they needed too. Their whole future could be ruined due to circumstances forced upon them.”



It seems that there are thieves in school, and most pupils are prepared to report it. And another thing is clear - there is a police presence at the school. PC Dodds said “people do get arrested, but it all depends on how serious the situation is.” So, once again, it comes down to assessing the situation, case by case.

But one thing pupils and teachers agree on is that more things should be done to highlight the negative effects theft can have on all involved, and what everyone can do about it. A number of pupils believe that during the early registration there should be lessons and workshopson the subject so pupils can learn about the issues and get an understanding of both sides of the problem.

And Ms Rose a French teacher agrees. “I think it should be talked about in form time and that the seniors should take more of a role and speak to the younger ones about it. I also think there should be a ‘restorative justice’ program. If you find that someone has stolen something then the thief and the victim have to get together and talk about it. This way the thief can see how their actions have affected the victim.”

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